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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC #01543-84

8 March 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM:

[redacted]  
National Intelligence Officer for NESA

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SUBJECT: The Gulf War and the USSR

1. The Gulf War has posed a predicament for Moscow in the Middle East. Moscow often can, and does, profit from regional instability. But in this war Moscow neither served as the spark nor has it really been involved as much more than a bystander. Yet Moscow's interests have probably suffered more than they have gained.

Soviet gains:

- Iran has a growing need for weapons, giving the Soviets a possible opportunity down the road to develop an inroad into Iran. Moscow has not yet been able to profit from this however.
- The Gulf War and Shia passions kindled by it have probably served to raise somewhat the level of anti-American feelings among Shia in the region. But these Islamic passions rarely translate into positive gains for the Soviets either.

Soviet losses:

- The general instability has caused the regional states to join in a pro-Western political-military defense grouping--the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The GCC furthermore deliberately excludes Iraq--the only Gulf state over which the Soviets have any influence.

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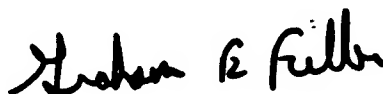
- Soviet policies in the course of the war have annoyed Iraq and caused it to move towards the West both for arms supplies and diplomatic/economic support.
  - The war has moderated Iraq's formerly revolutionary policies in the Persian Gulf, which were of net gain to the USSR.
  - Syria and Iraq--Moscow's two main allies in the region--are now at loggerheads.
  - The Gulf States now look more to the West for security in the face of the Iranian threat.
  - The Gulf States are also growing more Islamically conservative--to protect their right flank from fundamentalism--which doesn't help the West but certainly doesn't help the USSR either.
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2. In the long run, then, it is probably in the Soviet interest to see the war wind down. But Moscow can play almost no role in such a process:

- it has no special access to Iran,
- it has less entree to Baghdad than the West does,
- it has no appropriate regional military forces to move in to help keep the Gulf open for shipping--and wouldn't want to join the West in such a quasi-imperialistic exercise anyway, and
- it has no critical national interests at stake--compared to Western Europe and Japan.

3. Any effort by the US to work jointly with Moscow would give the Soviets the major role they crave, but would probably not produce any results beyond what the West could do without Moscow. Moscow could benefit from being publicly granted such a role, however, in that it would help legitimize Moscow's position in the eyes of the Gulf States--none of which have diplomatic relations with Moscow now (except Kuwait).



Graham E. Fuller

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